

BILLS THAT THE BABIES HAVE  
TO PAY

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AMERICAN FOUNDATION  
FOR THE BLIND INC.

January,  
Dec. 23, 1916

23, 1916

The main effort of the new organization has been to secure more general observance of the law requiring that babies' sore eyes be reported and prophylactic measures used. Thirty-two violations of the reporting law have been discov-

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says, 'Mr. Ballu,' he says, 'this is the one from the back of the store and he gist, a friend o' mine, he called some- another bottle of tonic and the drug- ning I happened into the drug store for seen and getting laughed at. One eve- childern was so sensitive about me being nighs for to get the air, seeing as the to go out walking round the block o' in another month quite a crop. I used had a soft little down on me head. And it on. Before many weeks was over I she followed directions about rubbing was bought with the dollar, and Nora "That hair tonic, ladies and gents, snickered."

drug store?" says she." Here Nora tonic that is being sold in the corner and why not buy a bottle of the hair hair more than with your hands, ma, you have to earn your living with your "But," says Nora to me, "it seems like for the kids," said Mrs. O'Rourke, "I suppose you meant me to spend it while the committee suddenly stiffened. less designs on the pad in front of her, roots of her hair and scribbled meaning- lusha remembered. She colored to the "There was no doubt that Miss Galusha, the dollar you give me?" Mrs. O'Rourke. "Do you mind, Miss

lady I was telling you about who had such grand success with your tonic; "Then Mr. Ballu he looked my head over and says he, 'Mrs. O'Rourke,' says he, 'suppose you come onto my payroll,' says he, 'for \$9 a week and all the tonic you can use thrown in. All you need to do is to set in the window with a sign up against you holding a bottle of the tonic fond-like in your hands,' says he. "Well, ladies and gents, I made some hit in that window. My friends all crowded around and that made every- body a-passing want to see. A young

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January		1917		
Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday





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The main effort of the new organization has been to secure more general observance of the law requiring that babies' sore eyes be reported and prophylactic measures used. Thirty-two violations of the reporting law have been discovered; one doctor and two midwives have been convicted and fined; the attorney-general has authorized the prosecutions of three other doctors and midwives, and evidence is being gathered concerning the other cases. Cooperation from state and local health departments, nursing associations and various other philanthropies makes possible a rapid extension of the work.

The greatest difficulty which the society encounters is said to be ignorance of the seriousness of infection in babies' eyes. Tragedies occur within a stone's throw of hospitals and dispensaries where blindness might have been averted.

Miss Van Blarcom tells of one young mother who, holding her blind baby in her arms, said that the baby's eyes might have been treated just as well as not, but that this was her first baby and midwives and grandmothers assured her out of the fullness of their knowledge of such things that it was only a "cold in the eyes"; that "it was natural for babies to have sore eyes and they will get well by themselves." But the baby will pay the penalty in lifelong blindness.

Amusing incidents occur in the midst of all the tragedy. In one case, under the authority of the state the society attempted to take a baby back to the hospital, from which the parents had removed it against the earnest advice of doctors and nurses. The mother was visited in her home, shown photographs of blind children and told the seriousness of her own baby's condition—but all to no avail. Finally, after several hours had been spent in persuasive argument, the still resisting parents were won over by the prospect of a taxi ride. So at nine o'clock at night a much delighted family accompanied the society's agent and the suffering baby to the hospital.

Sometimes the price paid by a baby for the ignorance and neglect of those accountable for its care is not alone its sight, with all that that means, but also its home, parents and relatives. Blind babies are not regarded as valuable assets and are not infrequently abandoned by the parents who are responsible for their blindness. Nor do one-eyed babies always find favor in the sight of their parents, for each year a number of them are left at Cook County Hospital and never claimed.

The average cost to the state to maintain and educate a blind person is estimated at something over \$10,000. This does not take into account the negative loss of productive citizens—the state's most valuable asset.

## BILLS THAT THE BABIES HAVE TO PAY

**T**HERE are in the state of Illinois between two and three thousand persons—babies, children, adults—who might see today had their eyes been properly attended to when sight was first endangered, says Carolyn C. Van Blarcom, in her first report of the Illinois Society for the Prevention of Blindness.

Organized effort in Illinois to prevent blindness dates only from March, although prior to that, work had been carried on informally by a volunteer group of physicians and laymen. This volunteer organization supported the state bill for preventing blindness in babies, which became effective July 1, 1915. In the past six months it has reorganized as the present society, made plans for sustained work, secured a secretary and enrolled over 800 members.





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